

The Jewelry of Jackie

Fifth in a Series

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It was in the spring of 1962 that jewelry seemed especially important to Jackie. At Wartski's, in London, she had seen and fallen in love with an antique 18th century sunburst clip and she wanted it to wear in her hair. It was priced at £2200. She had me find out exactly how much that amounted to in dollars. The answer was \$6,160.

Jackie wanted to make an exchange, or at least, to trade a few pieces of her jewelry and make up the difference in cash. She asked me to have her jewelry appraised. Soon my private office looked like a jewelry store; Charles Ernest Jewelers arrived one afternoon to look it all over.

There was a big aquamarine given her by the Brazilian government and the diamond wedding present clip which the Ambassador—Joseph Kennedy—had given her.

There was a sapphire and diamond bracelet from Van Cleef & Arpels, and a gold pin, given her during her visit to Greece in 1961—gold laurel leaves with an emerald.

There was a ruby and diamond pin of two strawberries that the President had bought Jackie for Christmas in 1960, and Jackie wanted to check Tiffany to see what it was worth.

I didn't fully realize how much precious gems meant to her until she called me into the Oval Room one day that spring—1962—and showed me a diamond encrusted sword that had been given to the President by Ibn Saud, King of Saudi Arabia.

Jackie asked me to call New York and have Tom Walsh come to the White House in strictest confidence. I was to show him the sword and find out whether the diamonds could be taken out and glass "gems" be substituted in their place.

I sighed with relief when he eventually reported that it would not be worthwhile to take out the gems. They would be too difficult to get out and the cost would be prohibitive.

The President now entered her jewelry saga. Jackie had decided she didn't like the emerald engagement ring he had given her, and he let her go ahead to see what the jewelers could do to make it more suitable to her taste.

Early in 1962, this was one of Jackie's big projects—the problem of redesigning her ring. She asked Van Cleef & Arpels in New York to do a wax model—in fact, three wax models.

One day's diary entry, in particular, tells the story:

June 15, 1962: Upon receipt of JBK Emerald/Diamond Engagement Ring, "remounted" into a wax model of her choice, Jackie asked for my opinion before making a definite decision. As I studied the extra rows of little diamonds, which now surrounded the two beautiful,



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initial stones, they seemed to detract from the true beauty of her ring in its original state. "Oh, no, Jackie—I think you'd be making a big mistake to change your ring this way," I told her. "To me, it looks much too bulky and takes away from the whole beauty of the ring." Her disappointment could not have been more obvious. "Oh," she stammered in disgust, "you're just like Jack."

She returned the ring, and wax models continued to go back and forth. In the end, Jackie finally gave up. She seemed to realize, as had the President and I, that her lovely ring required no further adornments, after all!

One day, she was exasperated because an unopened box of gifts from an Ivory Coast dignitary "hung

around for three days until someone finally gave it to George (the President's valet)."

The next day she was ordering "dust for eyelashes," which she had read about in an article by Eugenia Sheppard in the Herald Tribune.

Then it would be back to clothes, clothes, clothes. They would be so photographed and inspected around the world that Jackie felt she could not wear them again. So she made an arrangement with Oleg Cassini, to select her clothes for her Mexican trip, but he could keep them in his collection, and she would return some of them to him.

Jackie had come up with an idea for saving enough money for the special trip (to Italy with Caroline), so it wouldn't interfere with the budget.

She had decided that if a couple of her sisters-in-law paid rent on the JFK house in Hyannisport for a vacation, sharing the rent of \$1,800 between them, then she and Caroline would have the money for their round-trip tickets. The deal went through somehow with Eunice Shriver and Pat Lawford sharing the expense.

Jackie wanted the newer, pink-flowered cushions for the porch furniture stored in the basement and the older, white sailcloth set put on the chairs.

She wanted the old green chintz slipcovers on the furniture.

She wanted all the glass and china ornaments, including some urns on the dining-room mantel, stored, and only unbreakable pewter ashtrays left out.

She wanted all the towels, including beach towels, and bed linen packed and put away. She even wanted to store her huge beach toys, but she was leaving the croquet set. You couldn't beat Jackie for thoroughness—as an afterthought, she wanted me to make sure . . . an inventory of flower vases and equipment in the laundry room had been made.

Jackie's instructions to me kept flowing by phone and by courier plane. I was to file clippings, order chiffon scarves for her sent to the Cape, send her wig up with JFK and a long hair-piece from Alexandre's.

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